

How far in advance can you book a flight?

(Courtesy of Katie Genter, The Points Guy)



Whether you are paying for your tickets with cash or points and miles, booking your flight at the right time can help you get the lowest price and the best availability. Here at TPG, we spend a lot of time determining the [best time to book a flight to get the cheapest airfare](#).

There's no simple answer to that question, but it's almost always true that the sooner you book, the better.

The following dates are when revenue flights and award flights become bookable through some [popular airline programs](#). Additionally, here's all you need to know about booking a flight in advance.

How far in advance can you book an airline ticket?



D3SIGN/GETTY IMAGES

Some U.S.-based airlines open their booking windows for revenue flights a particular number of days before departure. For these airlines, you usually won’t see the lowest fares right when the booking window opens. However, other airlines periodically extend travel dates for which they’ll accept reservations. For these airlines, you can often snag the lowest fare by booking your trip shortly after the booking window opens.

Below you'll find when the revenue booking window opens for all the major U.S.-based airlines so you know how far in advance you can book your flight.

Note that seasonal routes may not be loaded when the booking window would normally open.

| Airline | Revenue booking window opens |
|------------------|--|
| Alaska Airlines. | 330 days before departure. |
| Allegiant Air. | Typically six to nine months in advance. |

| Airline | Revenue booking window opens |
|------------------------------|--|
| American Airlines. | 331 days before departure. |
| Delta Air Lines. | 331 days before departure. |
| Frontier Airlines. | Varies. |
| Hawaiian Airlines. | 330 days before departure. |
| JetBlue Airways. | 331 days before departure. |
| Southwest Airlines. | Varies, but typically six to nine months in advance. |
| Spirit Airlines. | Varies. |
| Sun Country Airlines. | Varies. |
| United Airlines. | 330 days before departure. |

Bookings may open at midnight in the corporate time zone of the airline, but this is by no means a hard rule. There is also often a lag between when an airline loads its schedule and when flights become bookable. In general, don't expect award space to consistently appear at the same time (at midnight or otherwise).

Some airlines periodically extend the date through which you can book flights; in these cases, you may want to subscribe to the airline's email newsletter in hopes that it sends an announcement when the flight schedule is extended. (Or, [subscribe to the TPG newsletter](#) and we will keep you up to date.)

Of course, if the airline you're interested in isn't listed above, you can search the airline's website to determine how far out you can currently book.

When can I book award tickets in advance?



ZACH GRIFF/THE POINTS GUY

Knowing when the booking window opens can be critical if you're looking to snag award tickets, especially if you're hoping to travel in a premium cabin. Although there's no guarantee that an airline will release award seats when the booking window opens, some will release a few seats. You'll have the best chance of snagging these seats if you act quickly once the booking window opens.

For U.S. carriers, the award booking window opens at the same time as revenue ticket bookings. In the chart below, we've also included a few popular international airlines because many readers find value in [booking award flights on U.S. carriers using these currencies](#). These numbers may be plus or minus a day due to time zone differences, so you may want to start searching for your award a few days early.

| Airline | Award booking window opens | Notes |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Aeroplan / Air Canada. | 355 days. | |
| Avianca LifeMiles. | 355 days. | May allow bookings for partners that release award space farther out (for example, TAP at 360 days). |
| British Airways. | 354 days. | |
| Etihad Guest. | 331 days. | |
| Singapore KrisFlyer. | 355 days. | |
| Virgin Atlantic Flying Club. | 331 days. | |

Note that you won't be able to book flights operated by U.S. airlines like Delta, United and American until both the airline you are booking with (using its miles or points) and the airline you are flying on open award bookings for your travel date. If you're not familiar with using transferable currencies, here are some helpful articles:

- [How to redeem American Express Membership Rewards for maximum value.](#)
- [How to redeem Chase Ultimate Rewards points for maximum value.](#)
- [How to redeem Citi ThankYou points for maximum value.](#)
- [Get more from your points with this transfer bonus.](#)

If your favorite airline isn't in the table above — or you simply want to see for yourself how far out you can book an award ticket on a particular airline — your best bet will be to go to the airline's website and search for award flights. If you're looking to book on one airline but fly on another, check when both airlines start accepting award bookings so you'll know when to start checking availability.

How far in advance should I book award travel?

The best time to book award travel is either when the schedule opens or at the last minute. That's because airlines typically release a first batch of award space when the schedule opens (between 330 and 362 days before your flight) and then a second batch right before the flight.

Do I have to reserve my flight when bookings open?

No, although you may be able to snag difficult-to-find awards if you book soon after seats become available. However, award availability is always changing (as airlines add and remove space, and passengers make and cancel reservations). So, it's worth continuing to search if you don't find what you want when bookings open.

Are there tools that check award availability and notify me when awards become available?



RGSTUDIO/GETTY IMAGES

Yes, one of these tools is [Expert Flyer](#) (which is owned by TPG's parent company, Red Ventures). You can set alerts to notify you when flight or upgrade awards become available on a range of dates and routings. Note that this method may not work as desired before the booking window opens since the schedules of some airlines appear before the flights are actually bookable.

Can you book a flight more than a year in advance?

On most airlines, the answer is no. You can refer to the chart above for the exact booking window data for each airline, but most are between six and 11 months before your departure date. Even though you

can't book a full year in advance, if you reserve your flight soon after the booking window, you'll still find the best prices and availability.

How far in advance should I book my flight if I pay cash?

Generally, you should book domestic flights one to four months in advance. For international flights, you should book at least six months in advance. You'll want to give yourself more time for research for the latter than when traveling on domestic itineraries. When you're booking holiday travel, it's often best to book as soon as possible.

Can I find last-minute flight deals?

Yes, you can certainly find many [last-minute deals](#) on both cash and award bookings. You can follow [TPG's deals page](#) for the latest deals. We also have a guide on the [best points and miles to use for last-minute flights](#).

Bottom line

It's important to know when the booking window opens for airlines that increase fares as more seats are booked (as well as for premium cabin seats, as awards for these seats are limited). If you have one of these bookings coming up, your best bet is to set a calendar reminder a day or two before you expect the booking window to open so you can start checking availability. Continue checking availability until you find a product and cost you are happy with.